

Schools Merino Wether Competition...

An initiative of Merino SA, the School Merino Wether Competition engages young people in the Merino Industry through a partnership with local stud breeders and local schools. Local studbreeders liaise with Ag Teachers at local schools and assist with inspecting, mentoring and educating students about all aspects of animal husbandry and show preparation.



The School Merino Wether Competition comprises of 3 (three) Merino or Poll Merino wethers under two years of age with no more than two permanent teeth. The competition is held annually at the Royal Adelaide Show – this year on Wednesday, September 7.

Wethers may be drawn from:

1. South Australian Merino and Poll Merino studs,
2. Commercial Merino or Poll Merino breeders within South Australia, or
3. An agricultural school's own flock.

Skill areas

As an outcome of the preparation of sheep for the competition, students will get insight into numerous key components in good sheep management that include:

- Sheep selection based on subjective and objective assessment
- Show preparation for competition
- Nutrition requirements
- Husbandry requirements
- Handling, both sheep and wool
- An understanding of profit drivers in Merino sheep production

Planning for the School Merino Wether Competition

NB Please read thoroughly.

October - December

Contact commercial or stud Merino breeders to source wethers. It is advisable to have at least one if not two spare wethers for each team. When sourcing wethers consider young sheep to give them every chance of not getting their 4 teeth prior to the Show.

If your school requires help contacting a breeder, make enquires to Merino SA. The schools can purchase wethers from a Merino producer at a fair average price.

February – March

Order regulation tags from Merino SA to tag all wethers, or alternately arrange for your stud contact to order tags on your school's behalf. info@merinosa.com.au

Each wether requires an electronic regulation tag to be eligible for entry into the Royal Adelaide Show. This tag indicates that the sheep has been March shorn in accordance with the SASMSA Shearing Regulations.

Wethers must be shorn before, on or after the 1st of March of the current year, but at the time of inspection each wether, allowing for natural growth, will not exceed the equivalent of 12.5 mm as at the 1st of March.

It is also the tag used to identify the sheep for objective data collated on that animal. i.e mid-side sample wool tests. Should a regulation tag be lost from a wether (e.g torn from the ear) a replacement tag can be sought from Merino SA and will require tagging by an Association-approved Shearing Inspector.

The tags are a **grey electronic tag**. This will assist with data collation, and provide a good learning opportunity. Wethers must be tagged, inspected **and weighed** by a committee comprising of two inspectors, both of whom shall be members of Merino SA. Contact Merino SA if you need to locate a Shearing Inspector.

The weight of the wethers shall be clearly noted in the 'Private Tag Number / Tattoo' column of the Shearing Inspection Report, provided with the tags. The weight is to be rounded to the closest **half kilogram** eg 35.5 kg.

The inspection report should be signed by the school representative and the Shearing Inspectors, with the yellow copy being retained by the school. The original white and blue copies are to be sent to Merino SA promptly, either by the school or the breeder **before April 30**. If a Shearing Inspection form is not received by Merino SA, the school's exhibits will be deemed ineligible to compete.

Wethers must be treated with an appropriate animal husbandry chemical to ensure they are not infested with lice. Wethers with lice or have had long wool applications to eradicate lice are not permitted entry to the Royal Adelaide Show. Do not assume your wethers are lice free at the point of shearing. Please also read the Royal Adelaide Show Competition requirements in relation to sheep health.

Wethers are to be cared for by students and teachers on school grounds or their associated agricultural facility, at latest by inspection if not earlier.

March to September

A nutrition program needs to be formulated and applied by the students. Wethers will need to be carefully introduced onto feed rations being careful not to cause acidosis (grain poisoning). The program will need to consist of an induction ration then building on that right through to a finishing ration 6 weeks prior to the competition. Animal nutritionist through local stock agents would be a good resource to ensure feeding requirements are adequate.

Wethers should be handled on a regular basis. This will ensure they become calm and relaxed around people. By doing this they will become easier to handle and put on weight more readily.

Haltering and leading the wethers is recommended.

June & July

Ordering tags gives Merino SA an indication of a school's interest in the Wether Competition, however **Schools must submit their entries directly to the Royal Adelaide Show by 5.00pm July 8 (tbc)**. This is done via the Show's online portal www.theshow.com.au and you will need to pay for entries at this time. We strongly recommend entries are placed early (eg in May /June) to ensure participation as the Show Society will not allow entries to be received beyond the specified date.

Mid-side sampling of the wether's wool is to be taken in late June, just prior to school holidays. Schools which have sent Shearing Inspection forms with tag and weight info to Merino SA will be sent sample bags and recording cards in June.

The schools are to arrange for the mid- side samples to be taken between **June 21 & July 2 (tbc)** with their two inspectors. Please be aware this is a busy time for breeders so give them plenty of notice to arrange a suitable time.

Wool samples are to be taken from your wethers by the inspectors. These are then sent by the school for testing at Lazerline. Merino SA will provide an addressed satchel for this purpose. The test results will be forwarded from the laboratory to Merino SA for collation and sent back to the schools in August. These wool tests should then be used to select the wethers for the competition along with subjective appraisals. If unsure with the final selections of your team, contact a local stud breeder for advice. **Forward your team selection tag numbers to Merino SA by 24 August.**

Wethers will require a small crutch or 'bung hole' to enhance presentation and keep the breech of the sheep clean.

It is advisable to weigh wethers each month to monitor weight gain.

Also, check the wether's teeth to ensure each sheep has no more than two permanent teeth, as per entry requirements. Wethers with more than two permanent teeth at the Royal Adelaide Show will be deemed ineligible to compete.

September

Prior to travelling to the Royal Adelaide Show **check tags, check teeth, check paperwork.**

A National Vendor Declaration and Sheep Health Statement must accompany the wethers in transit to the Royal Adelaide Show. These are legal documents and are to be presented to the sheep office (located in the sheep shed). Wethers will not be permitted to be unloaded without these documents.

The Royal Adelaide Show will make available vehicle passes for schools to unload their exhibits on the Tuesday afternoon of the Show, usually between 1- 5pm.

Schools are also required to take to the Show the appropriate feed rations for the wethers, sufficient for **the five-day Wednesday - Sunday** period while being held in the Stud Sheep Pavilion at the Adelaide Showground.

Please note:

1. Promotion of Bloodlines at the Show:

Merino SA has a policy that studs that assist schools are not to promote or have promoted their bloodlines through the competition. The Association considers that the focus of the competition is to encourage students' interest in the wool and sheepmeat industries and enhance their skill development.

2. Proceeds from the Competition

Merino SA collects the proceeds received from the sale of the fleece wool and the wethers. A small percentage is deducted to cover costs associated with the event, with the net proceeds distributed equally (per team) to each participating school. Exhibitors are advised that it may take several months for the Association to receive the proceeds from the sale of wool and wethers for distribution back to the schools.

Payments will be made via EFT transfer to the School's nominated bank account.

3. Sponsors & Supporters

The members of Merino SA would like to take the opportunity to thank all sponsors and supporters for their contribution toward the competition:

<i>ATASA</i>	<i>Australian Wool Innovation</i>
<i>Australian Wool Network</i>	<i>Elders</i>
<i>Lazerline</i>	<i>Mutooroo Pastoral Company</i>
<i>Spence Dix & Co</i>	<i>SACC Shearer Training Inc</i>
<i>Thomas Foods International</i>	<i>Urrbrae Ag High School</i>

together with the many SA Stud Merino Sheepbreeders who contribute their time and knowledge throughout the year.

Please contact Merino SA for any queries on 8212 4157 or email:
info@merinosa.com.au



Thank you for your interest, we hope it proves a rewarding year for you and the students!